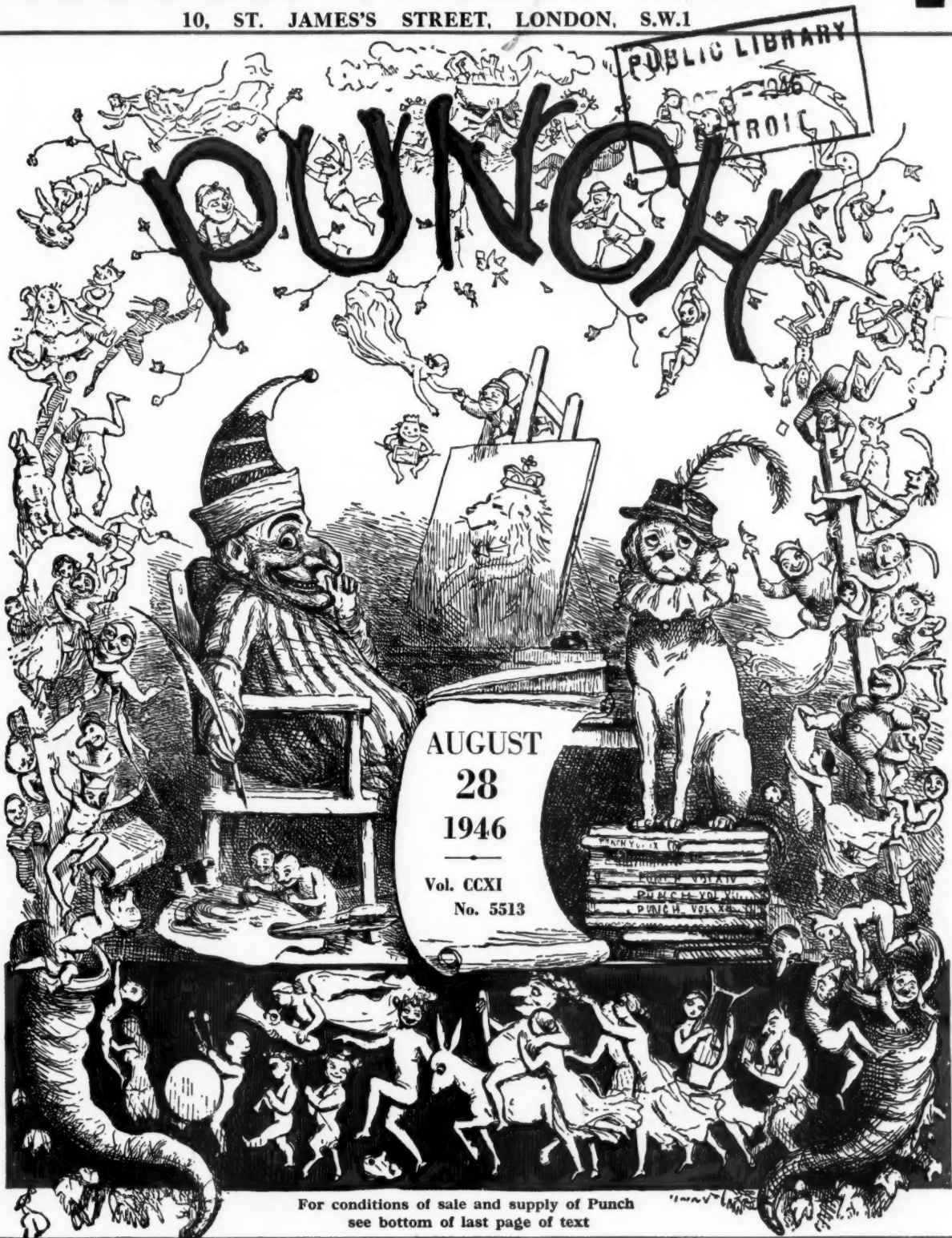


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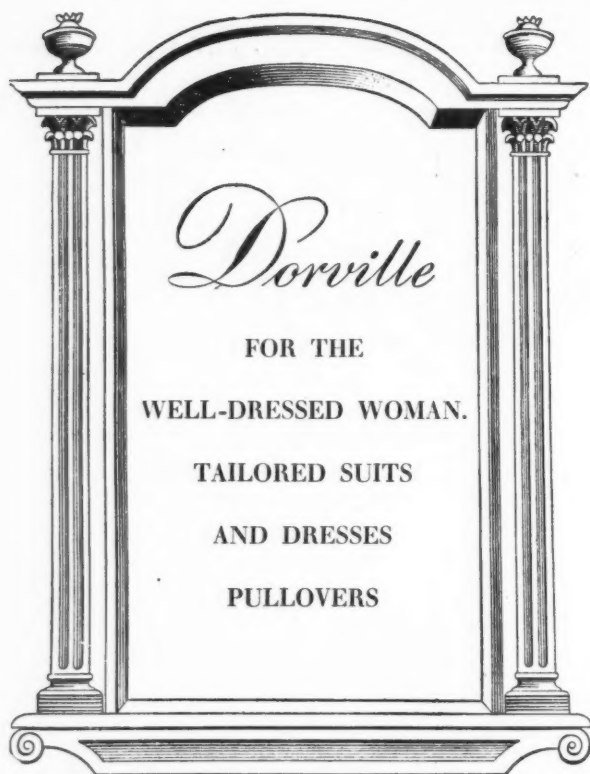
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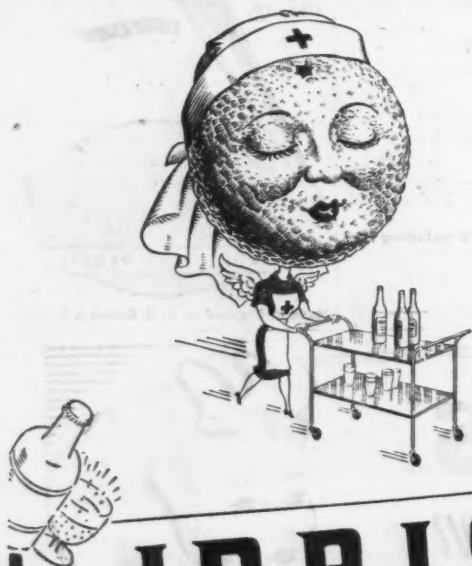
W. M. Thackeray—"The Virginians"

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PUNCH

OR

The London Charivari



Vol. CCXI No. 5513

August 28 1946

Charivaria

Two patter comedians who performed together before the war were recently reunited. Quite by chance they met in the old script.

The Paris Peace Conference is not broadcast. There is a summing-up in the nine o'clock news, but no round-by-round commentary during the contest.

A retired doctor recalls that forty years ago he was consulted by a dramatic critic who was sleeping badly. In those days, acting was acting.

"The acrid tang of burning leaves is an indication of summer's departure and autumn's advent," says a writer. And a poignant reminder to smokers of the static cigarette shortage.



We understand that the title of a Hollywood film has been changed at the last moment, the producer having bought a different novel for it.

A sailor informs us that after giving farm work a trial he has decided to rejoin the Navy. On the other hand a great many back-to-the-land movements have started at sea.

Two men charged in court for causing a disturbance pleaded that they were doing a crossword puzzle together. And one word led to another.

How To Keep Your Friends

"General Franco can and does put into prison any person he likes for as long as he likes."—*Weekly paper*.

"There would have been no Nelson column if the great seaman had fought in a recent war," asserts a correspondent. Unless of course he had written it himself in one of the newspapers.

The writer of an article on squatters' rights points out that if squatters aren't disturbed for five years or more the property is considered their own. Now we *know* who Whitehall belongs to.

An American who has just arrived in Britain says that the Britisher is treated with consideration in every country in the world. You remember we said he has only just arrived in Britain?

The M.C.C. has expressed disapproval of freak decisions by county cricket captains. In Leeds there is a feeling that the M.C.C. has itself erred in this respect by deciding not to send an All-Yorkshire team to Australia.

"REBUILDING GERMANY
Inverness Sergeant's Big Job."

"The Inverness Courier."

Want any help, Sarge?

It was stated of a man charged in court that he took a cake from a shop and ran off. He now knows that he can't have his cake and beat it.



"I lost all my best clothes on my first sea cruise," confesses a typist. That's what comes of using the cupboard with the circular door in one's cabin.

Suspense

"His bride is an experienced rock climber and her mother . . . said: 'Although the trek is going to be tough, Audrey is looking forward to it. She has done a lot of climbing and walking, and is happy when dangling on the end of a rope.'"—*Manchester paper*.

A novelist tells us that he often goes to night-clubs just to get the atmosphere. Presumably he takes a knife with him and carries it away in chunks.

We regret that the Printing Trade dispute is still not settled; and faced again with the alternatives of supplying a full issue to a limited number of readers or supplying a smaller issue to all our readers, we have chosen the latter. We apologize for the inconvenience of the reduced issue, the smaller type used, and the late delivery. As soon as this dispute is settled larger-sized issues will be published to compensate readers for what has been lost.

The Dark Oracle

OPEN the page of secret things
That are not good for man to know,
Where symbols borne on bat-like wings
And nameless numbers go.

Here is no kinship with the sun,
But all in deepest night is hid—
Open the runes from R.B.I.
On to the General Grid.

Show me the Rosicrucian signs
That whispering women learn and moan,
The T's and G's, the 10's, the 9's,
The spaces lorn and lone.

What hides in here? What fate? What force?
How subtly, by what sure degrees
Our author changes his discourse
To eggs, to fats, to cheese!

Dark hands that point I know not where,
Warnings of deeds that none may do,
Wild leaves of terror and despair,
The shame that stalks as 2.

To-day my spirit has some need
Through all those shadowy paths to tread—
Open the runes and let me read
The Algebra of Bread.

EVOE.

I Am Tired of London.

IT is useless to quote Dr. Johnson against me. I do not by any means subscribe to every statement made by the Doctor and could, if it pleased me to do so, set down a score or more of his utterances and instantly contradict them. We will leave Dr. Johnson out of this, I think.

I am tired of London. I am tired of buses and tubes and taxis and ugly tobacconists and people in pin-stripe suits. I am tired of unshaven men sitting on piles of evening papers and shaking their heads at my penny, tired of women inspectors at platform barriers who take no notice of my ticket when I proffer it but peremptorily demand it for clipping when I don't, tired of the unlovely backs of all the people who stand in front of me in bus queues.

I am particularly tired of sardine sandwiches. Dr. Johnson, who thought he knew all about London, never ate a sardine sandwich in his life. I have eaten plenty and I am tired of them. A man must take something in the middle of the day, if only to mark off the intensive labours of the morning from the traditionally more leisurely and contemplative tempo of the afternoon; and a sardine sandwich kills the appetite, I find, more quickly and cheaply than anything else now offered for sale as food in the heart of London.

They cost me tenpence. A man of my acquaintance says he knows of a place where, for ninepence, you can get a roll stuffed with a mixture of pressed meat and beetroot so ingeniously blended that the mere sight of it is often enough to make a man feel he has had all he wants till tea-time. And I believe him. But I do not wish to go to this place. It seems to me that, even to save himself a penny, a man is not justified in solving his lunch problem in this way. Food ought, in my submission, to pass the lips.

But I am terribly tired of sardines.

I am also tired of trying to buy a pair of grey flannel trousers. It may be unfair to single out London for its grey flannel trouserlessness. The famine may stretch to Bristol and Birmingham; kind-hearted assistants may at this very moment be telling customers that there isn't a pair to be had in Hartlepool. I speak only of what I know. And I know I am tired of trying to buy a pair of grey flannels in London. It is useless to expect me to say I am tired of trying to buy them in Bristol or Haverfordwest until I have been to these places and tried.

A fat lot Dr. Johnson knew about grey flannel trousers. I don't suppose he ever bought a pair in London or anywhere else. Boswell would certainly have mentioned it if he had. Besides, what would a man "more beastly in his dress and person than anything I ever beheld" (the description is Mrs. Harris's and the year, if you must have it, 1775) be doing with a new pair of anything?

I am utterly weary of not going to theatres and Lord's and

Wimbledon and the White City—also the Horse Show, the Rose Show, Henley, the Old Cocks' parade and the Victoria and Albert. It is easy enough for people who live in Skye or Newcastle or Dolwyddelan not to go to Lord's. Skegness folk can keep away from the White City with ease. But in London, on a Saturday, the feeling that one ought perhaps to make an effort to see Middlesex or Wooderson or Plesso is very strong, and resisting it takes a lot out of a man. Before the war I used to give in and go, and enjoy myself actually. But it's no use now; you only find that everybody else has gone too and you can't get in. Everybody goes to everything.

I tell you frankly, the endless business of not doing anything about trying to get a seat for the Test Match at the Oval recently exhausted me to the point of collapse.

If it were not for my determination to keep Dr. Johnson out of this altogether I could quote you a remark of his about things that are worth seeing but not worth going to see. That's the trouble with London at present. It's full of things worth seeing but hardly worth the intolerable difficulty of going to see. The rotten part of it is that I still want to see them—that's what wears me out so.

It is typical of Johnson, by the way, that his remark was made about the Giant's Causeway—a thing anybody can decide not to go and see without the slightest sense of strain.

Well, I'm off. In a week or two, perhaps, I may be able to tell you why I am so terribly tired of the country.

H. F. E.

Hints Again

I HOPE my readers won't mind if to-day I give them another collection of hints (the third, as the title aims at indicating), but there were a few more things I wanted to help them with. I don't, for instance, like to think of my readers slamming refrigerator handles down on their thumbs, and I can help them by reminding them that this only happens to people who leave their thumbs under refrigerator handles. But what about those of my readers who have never left their thumbs under refrigerator handles but still find life difficult because they are constantly annoying themselves



"Sorry you're being t-r-r-roubled."

by saying things like "There's lots of potatoes" when their education, natural priggishness and general keenness all point to "There are lots"? I suggest that those people recall how once, way back in English literature, the word "news" was a plural too—people who worry about "lots" are just the people to recall this—and that they shouldn't worry, because to say "There's lots" sounds just as normal as they fear, and to say "There are lots of potatoes" clearly enough to be noticed will not get its due credit from an audience which, after all, only wanted to know if it could have some more runner beans.

Now for some advice on the use of stamp-books. Statisticians tell us that there are about two kinds of stamp-book, the half-crown one and the one costing more. The half-crown stamp-book, as far as they can judge from the halfpenny one still there and the information on the cover, has three sheets of stamps—twopence-halfpennies, twopennies and halfpennies. What some of my readers will have sometimes wondered is if it is safe to rush through the twopence-halfpennies first or if they would be more prudent to mix them a bit, say a twopenny and a halfpenny to start with, and the other five halfpennies a day or so later, just to use them up? Well, I want such readers to think again, and to ask themselves if they are not the people who are to be found scrabbling miserably behind the last twopenny stamp. Mention of stamps brings me to that large section of the public who would like an easy method of identifying glued-down business envelopes from white but friendly ones. Statisticians, always eager to help, say that a business envelope has a tendency to a curved flap—or ogee, as those who do crosswords would define it without being absolutely



"Canvas!"

sure they are right—but that they wouldn't recommend anyone to bank on this nowadays. Psychologists say more ruthlessly that the public should pick its envelopes up and turn them over, and as that is what it does anyway I think we can leave it at that.

Now for a hint on reading. I don't mean an obvious hint—like starting at the left of a line or not taking the first word of a book or article to be all that its capitals imply—but some advice on a more subtle aspect of literature; those occasions when we find ourselves appreciating a book to a degree which makes us as clever as the book itself. People getting excited over a book behave in a way we might think surprising if it was not so typical. They become desperately anxious to finish it—I don't mean only to read more of it, but also to have less left to read—and they start worrying long before they have finished because they don't think they are impressing others as they have impressed themselves with their powers of appreciation. My advice to these people is not to rely on any of the friends who say they must read it too, though they may place perhaps a shade more faith in those who emphasize the word "read" instead of the more usually favoured "must." It is a sign that the speaker is feeling judicious and not at that moment wondering about the laundry. I want also to say a word on newspaper-reading. One of the newspaper public's difficulties is that when it hands on or swops its newspaper at breakfast the items it didn't bother to read but which it can now see across the table appear utterly fascinating. I should like to help people here, but I must warn them that as it is only the items they haven't read the problem is pretty insoluble. They could get round it by reading every word of the paper before they pass it on, but this calls for a co-operation rare in fellow-breakfasters, one of whose characteristics is that when they ask if we want to swap papers they mean what they are saying, which is that they want to.

I expect my readers have often found that they cannot shut a wardrobe door, not even after they have checked round the edges for juttings-out. I would advise them not to bother to shut the door between checking the edges and investigating again, but to go straight for the coat-hangers, when they will find that once again one has swung round and settled itself comfortably at right angles to the rail. I would also advise them not to blame the coat-hanger

(which cannot after all co-operate in a scheme it is not even conscious of) and not to push it sideways so hard that the coat falls off. My advice, in fact, is just the irritating sort they will be giving themselves. To make up for it, here is a practical hint. Never forget that a tape-measure is five feet long. I am referring of course to a tape-measure which is five feet long. The 6 in the figure 60 at the end (or, more accurately, the beginning, it being moderately inevitable that a tape-measure should start work the wrong side up) has, for all its brightly deceptive appearance, nothing whatever to do with six feet. I admit that this is the sort of thing my readers say to themselves afterwards, but I don't think they worry in between times, and I thought I might just catch someone about to measure something. As for the fact that tape-measures begin at the end unless you turn them the right way round, I ought to mention that even the most confident arithmetician can get befuddled over long distances on a reversed tape-measure, and that the people holding the other end cannot be blamed for acting as end-holders traditionally do—obeying their orders with the muzzy abstraction of someone called away from something more interesting, or else chipping in with advice as annoying as it is half-correct.

I had better end with two or three miscellaneous hints, or I shan't get in everything I want my readers to know I know as well as they do. Here is a hint for people posting magazines; it is not as efficient as it seemed at first to roll your magazine from the edges of the pages inwards to the binding. I know that to roll a magazine outwards is to leave a staircase of edges, but to roll it inwards is to realize that the pages knew what they were up to in staggering themselves. The next hint concerns people reassembling the tops of gas-stoves after cleaning: don't be discouraged. The same applies, in a milder degree, to people altering the position of the shelves in the oven. My last hint is for people arguing over whether they say "Cumpton," "Brompton" and so on or "Compton" and "Brompton," and it is simply that no one was ever won to the other side in this controversy by mere talk; as far as statisticians can assess, the whole thing goes back to early influences like knowing a Cumpton at school, and the best we can do for ourselves in such an argument is a plain statement of our own opinion and a suggestion that we should not hold it if it were not the only possible one anyway.

At the Pictures

SIAM AND EUROPE

ABOUT the year 1860, it seems, an English lady went to Siam to teach the King's children; *Anna and the King of Siam* (Director: JOHN CROMWELL) describes how—after some initial difficulty in getting herself taken seriously at all—she soon became the instructor and adviser of the King himself, and influenced the history of the country. It is on the whole a pleasant and entertaining film, with not much seriously wrong with it except for the bit towards the end where some box-office czar got loose and rammed in an abominable and totally irrelevant episode of love and torture for the sake of the morons who expect that kind of thing in an "Oriental" picture. The main story, the real story, depends on *Anna* and the *King*; and IRENE DUNNE and REX HARRISON handle these parts well and make the situation credible—though Mr. HARRISON is not, I think, able to be so personally credible as he might be, because he trails such a cloud of English associations. By pitching his voice a trifle higher than usual and by assuming a restless, capricious, child-like air he does a great deal, but not perhaps quite enough to give the *King* a real character.

Anna, however, is understandable and believable. She is sensible, self-reliant, strong-minded, tolerant; in any difficulty with the natives her sympathy is for them, not for herself ("Poor souls, they don't seem to understand"). The fact that she does not appear "English" is not really important.

The audience has the usual sort of trouble in distinguishing, in the dialogue, between high-flown English with no grammatical mistakes, which is meant to be the language of the country, and high-flown English without the articles, which is meant to be taken literally as English. The *King* himself also has a habit of never using any other tense than the future for the verb to be—when he means "Are you?" he is apt to say "Shall you be . . . ?" or even "You shall be . . . ?" Otherwise, if we believe this film, *Anna* must have felt quite at home in Siam; she can have found it not much worse than quaint. The *King's* palace, like everywhere else, is all beautifully clean and polished; there isn't sight or sound of any kind of insect the whole time, or indeed of any other kind of unwelcome animal except a dead fish. This is a weakness, for it minimizes the effect of what was plainly a remarkable achievement. But the film—except for that senseless interpolation I mentioned—is quite attractive.

Early in *The Searching Wind* (Director: WILLIAM DISTERLE) one notices that cues for flashbacks, perfectly obvious cues, it seems, are apparently being ignored; and one is lulled into a sense of false security. But then it becomes clear that these opportunities were left alone only because a really big one was going to be taken later. The story deals with an American ambassador, his wife, and his early love; meeting at the end of the recent war, they recall (in one long flashback) earlier meetings. Always, it appears, the three of them were together at historic moments: in Rome at the time when the Fascists took over, in Spain during the Civil War, in Prague at the time of Munich. The theme is "appeasement." The well-meaning diplomatist, always "doing his best," did not realize what was going

on; his wife, intent on mixing socially with the "right people" (i.e., the wrong people), did a great deal to mislead him; only the third member of the trio, one of those newspaper-women Americans love to present as dashing and heroic figures—in the U.S., and to a lesser degree here, the adjectives now go with the job—understood everything, and tried to make him understand, and failed.

The film is admirably acted, and is worth seeing for that alone; continuously competent playing, competently directed, can give real pleasure. ROBERT YOUNG as the worried diplomatist, ANN RICHARDS as the irritating wife, SYLVIA SIDNEY as the sad newspaper-woman, all do well. But the most memorable character is the fluttering, elderly, irresponsible Nazi brilliantly sketched by ALBERT BASSERMAN.



[Anna and the King of Siam]

A FAMILY MAN

The King REX HARRISON

If there were room we would go back into large type for this final note on JILL CRAIGIE's British documentary about the plan for the rebuilding of Plymouth, *The Way We Live*. This was shown to the Press and got a good deal of favourable publicity some weeks ago, but only since August 16th have the public been able to see it, because before that the exhibitors thought it wouldn't be box-office. Even now, I'm sure, the cinema business men believe that when the critics' praise has had time to fade in your memory you will lose interest in this film; the fact that in the programme at the Leicester Square Odeon it is balanced against the childishly absurd Technicolor confection *Night in Paradise*, a safe money-maker, prompts the idea that even there they weren't going to take any real financial risk.

You won't regret having made an effort to see this; and to judge from the absorbed, amused audience when I was at the Odeon (hardly a cough) no exhibitor will regret having booked it. R. M.

Song of the Road

III

48. "Make as little noise as possible. Do not drive on the horn. Use your horn only when it is really necessary; its use does not give you the right of way or absolve you from the duty of taking every precaution."

You blow your horn at me, sir. Why? You're in a hurry? So am I. I too have an important date: I too am very, very late. I pay my taxes when they're due, And think myself as good as you. You blow your horn. It's not a noise That's high among the nation's joys. It is a noise that should be barred Unless necessity is hard. Here, silently, you should have slowed And let me get across the road. For, let me add, you have a horn Not to intimidate, but warn. You seem to think, when you have blown, The King's Highway becomes your own. Well, you are wrong: when you have made That rude and raucous fanfare Your duties still are what they were, To drive with courtesy and care.

49. "The faster you travel, the smaller will be the margin of safety in emergency, and the worse the smash if an accident happens. Always be able to pull up well within the distance you can see is clear."

It is a truth conceded far and wide That stationary cars do not collide: And, when they move—it is by all agreed— The force of impact varies with the speed. These words adorn the tombstones of the rash: "The more the speed the stickier the smash." The more the speed the less the time to think: The more the speed the quicker you're in clink. So, though velocity is what you like, Be sure that you can stop before you strike.

50. "Never accelerate when being overtaken."

You ass!
As I pass,
You go faster!
Disaster.

SPEED LIMITS

51. "A speed limit is imposed for reasons of safety which may not always be obvious. To exceed it is to take a risk, as well as being an offence."

You have a very clever brain:
To you it's far from clear
Why anybody not insane
Should want Speed Limits here.

But there it is. They thought it best
For those who walk or bike it.
If you'd arrive without arrest
Slow down, old boy, and like it!

If you drive a MOTOR VEHICLE study this Section.

DOORS

54. "Before opening any door of a vehicle make sure that the vehicle has stopped and that you will not endanger or inconvenience anyone on the road or footpath."

Pray open when we've stopped, and not before..
There is a lamp-post. That's my favourite door.

If you are a PEDAL CYCLIST study this Section.

GENERAL.

62. "Ride in single file when road or traffic conditions require it and never more than two abreast."

**Single file is often best:
Never more than two abreast.
You're not very big, but still
You should see the space you fill.**

63. "Do not wobble about the road."

Pray do not wobble
About the place,
For you take dobble
The proper space.
We're awfully sorry,
And here's a kiss,
But such a quarry
Is hard to miss.

64. "When traffic is held up do not take risks by riding along a narrow space between vehicles."

Don't like an arrow dart
Through halted bus and tram:
For somebody may start,
And you'll be jam. A. P. H.

Normandy, 1946

GOOD old Southern Railway! It absorbed heroically a frightful battering in the war and now it takes one to France again, and with all the flourish of olden times. "The Continental Boat Train via Dieppe will leave Platform 7 . . ." is much the best thing I have heard for years. I want to go and hug the loud-speaking-girl wherever she is lurking. The train is full. There are nuns in it and comfortably padded men in black hats making notes in the financial columns and a few uniforms going back from leave, but there are fewer frivolous persons than there used to be, like myself. How much can Normandy, so rich and beautiful but so scorched by battle, offer us? I am going to try to find out.

Newhaven drops behind. Kind men in white coats smiling the Christian smile of the universal uncle urge nourishment. One of them tells me the little *Ile of Thanet* is only a locum on this route while her bigger sisters sit for their new make-up, and if I go on deck I will see the scars of Dunkirk and D Day. There is also an ugly swell. Someone whom I trust has put a tiny box in my pocket calling itself "HYOSCINE HYDROBROMIDE 1/100," but even the assurance that it made all the difference at Arromanches fails to convince me that so infinitesimal a potion can master so enormous an affliction. Yet, wonderfully it does. One falls over, but one survives. So note it in your logs, frailer vessels.

From the sea Dieppe shows little damage, but as we burrow gently into the long narrow harbour, between the rows of gesticulating anglers, children and ex-prime ministers who have for long made up the reception committee at every French port, you begin to see patched roofs and here and there a gutted house. Men are hammering although it is Saturday afternoon. I am

relieved to see that the arcade at the head of the quay, where legions of hungry Englishmen have demolished enough *moules marinières* to make a causeway back to Newhaven, is still itself.

On the roof of the customs-house a very old man in blue dungarees is thoughtfully smoking a cigar. I cannot tell why he is there, I only know it would have been bitterly disappointing if he were not. I am a disregarded molecule in a long and stagnant queue, and I happen to be content because I am goggling at a board on the side of the Paris train, drawn up alongside, which declaims, in perhaps the most poetic phrase in the whole of the lovely French language, "GRANDS EXPRESS EUROPÉENS." But an hour and a half from gangway to freedom is bad public relations, and I hope the French, who otherwise understand hospitality so truly, will forgive me for saying so. Is our own entry any quicker? I dare say not. All customs-houses in every land are zoos crying out for abolition.

LE BIFTECK A DOUBLÉ AUX ETATS-UNIS

France-soir

London knew nothing about the crossings on the Seine, so as I want to get into Calvados without delay I have gratefully accepted a lift in a special motor-bus to Deauville, a horseshoe journey of a hundred miles. The main road is remetalled and there is hardly any sign of war until Rouen, where the cathedral is tragically in tatters and a large area round it, stretching down

to the right bank, very badly knocked about. It is a marvellous evening, an evening of huge skies. As we drive through the uplands the sun is setting on great rolling fields of magnificent wheat and barley, with which even Cobbett should have been satisfied; but my agricultural conclusions being less confident than his, I appeal to my neighbours in the bus. They come from Yorkshire and concede the corn to be champion and at least three weeks ahead of theirs. It looks as if the French might soon have hot rolls again. About Pont Audemer it grows dark, with a lingering after-glow across the hills. Two villages we go through are *en fête*, for a saint or some other obliging person. Fairy lights wink from lamp-posts and people are dancing in the streets. I make to get out and join them but am suitably restrained. Then Deauville suddenly arrives, an artificial sort of terminus after those villages, but we are glad to go to sleep.

ERIC.

Subjective Measurement

GEOLOGISTS, geographers, will say
That all the hills are dwindling every day,
By denudation ceaseless as it's slow,
But those that recently I climbed, I swear,
Are definitely taller than they were
When last I scaled them twenty years ago.

W. K. H.

This Week's Baffling Offer

"WANTED—Elderly woman to look after red-headed fruit inspector (age 18 mos.) during fruit season. Good wages, sleep in."
Advt in Canadian paper.



"Do you think it might make her discontented with things? You see, WE live in a Portal."



"I'll murder this bloke if it isn't a Colorado after all."

The Barmecide's Guests : 1946

WHEN I was younger than I am
 my eager heart was on tenter-hooks
 to see the world—which made me
 cram
 my head with a welter of travel-books.
 Portages, savages, heat and cold,
 the steamy jungle, the mountain-track,
 the map's blank spaces, the search for gold:
 they kept me awake to the dawn's first
 crack.
 Still does my heart go rub-a-dub-dub
 when in such books I'm looking.
 At a savourless meal in a dreary club
 I sit and brood—in a bone-dry pub—
 on the wines of the country, the local
 grub
 and rum, exotic cooking.
 There's rose-leaf jam. There's peccary ham.
 There's rainbow-trout broiled freshly.
 A barbecue? Ah! That would do!
 On meatless days espec'ly.
 (In times gone by I would decry
 indulgences so fleshly.)
 Dully I dally with half a chop—
 all one may, in this pass, pick—
 while I read of young guinea-fowl baked in
 clay
 or palolo cooked in the South Sea way
 or birds'-nest soup (like aspic).

When I was younger than I am
 with a generous heart (if indifferent looks)
 my sympathies snarled in a tangled jam
 with the troubles of people in plays and books.
 The hideous fate of *Œdipus Rex*
 purged me with pity and terror—
 I was Bonaparte on *Bellerophon's* decks—
 Kipps writhing in social error.
 Still as of old does my heart emote,
 but now my heart is harder:
 What brings the lump to my aching throat?
 What passages does my pencil note?
 The raptures of gourmets, learned by rote
 and lyric praise of the larder.

Rodolphe and Madame Bovary
 enjoy a lovers' meeting—
 Fair Madeleine on Saint Agnes' Eve
 muses, her heart a-beating:
 and hard beats mine with such rare wine,
 such Barmecidal eating!
 "Item, A capon: 2s. 2d."—
 and sauce—and eke sack? Ho! Ho!
 Shall I dine with Lucullus to-night, perchance?
 With Vronsky and Anna? In Balzac's France?
 In a sinister street in Soho?
 On Barmecidal feasts I'm keen
 but oh, my soul doth languish
 at full-scale banquets on the screen—
 I just can't bear the anguish.

R. C. S.



THE UNINVITED SUITOR

"Go away. You can't swim here, Leandrovitch."

At the Play

"CLUTTERBUCK" (WYNHAM'S)

To find the right man to play the title rôle cannot have been easy. *Clutterbuck* crosses the stage but thrice and each time in pregnant silence, yet in this brief space Mr. GORDON BELL contrives to establish unmistakably the irresistible wrecker of homes on his annual escape from the cloistered eclecticism of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

This is a futility play, in outlook utterly amoral, of the kind Mr. BENN LEVY writes with uncommon skill. A comedy shivering constantly on the brink of farce, it yet remains comedy. Mr. LEVY was his own producer, and both in dialogue and acting the opening scenes are very polished fooling; and though the pace is not maintained and flattish spots appear, one continues to draw a handsome dividend in laughter. The position, briefly, is as follows. Two couples go cruising. *Jane* (Miss CONSTANCE CUMMINGS) and *Deborah* (Miss PATRICIA BURKE) are old friends re-meeting and anxious that their husbands shall like each other. *Jane* has married *Julian* (Mr. NAUNTON WAYNE), a bluff writer of Existentialist novels which surprisingly sell, and *Julian* proves oil to the vinegar of *Arthur* (Mr. BASIL RADFORD), a hearty, Woosterish tea-planter. Even over 1830 brandy the boys do not get on. But we are forgetting *Clutterbuck*. It turns out, gradually and with infinite cunning, that both girls have participated, in Venice, in *Clutterbuck's* passionate recessions from South Kensington; and, further, that his wife, *Melissa* (Miss LALAGE LEWIS), an anything but dumb blonde, has at different times lived in domestic felicity with both *Julian* and *Arthur*. On these discoveries the boys come together, the girls fly apart; until, after a night in which the boys take *Melissa* on shore to look at fireworks and the girls and *Clutterbuck* stay in the ship, we are back again where we

began. The events of the night are delicately shrouded, but for some reason the girls are once more deliciously friendly, the boys at loggerheads. Interpret these phenomena as you will.

In *Julian* Mr. LEVY has created a character much better than the piece demands. The idea of a painstaking novelist shocked by the slapdash methods

well on the credit side. Manfully disguising her true nature, Miss BURKE finds hard-boiled charms in plenty; Miss LEWIS leaves no doubt of *Melissa's* ability to cope with *Clutterbuck*, and as an Oriental waiter Mr. CHARLES WADE gives house room to the most formidable set of property teeth I can remember.

Of *Clutterbuck*, the great lover, cloaking his fearful magnetism beneath smoked glasses and a cap, we have already spoken. On the first night he delivered the speech to end stage speeches, which must certainly be included in the text of the play.

"DRAMA AT INISH"
(GRANVILLE)

A visit by the Irish Players is an event, and anything by Mr. LENNOX ROBINSON worth seeing. This is a comedy describing the emotional havoc stirred up in a peaceful Irish town by a company of earnest troupers out to sear the provincial soul with Ibsen and other calorific masters. The scene is a small hotel where the leading couple is billeted, and its blowy sitting-room is an intelligence centre into which pour the harrowing reports of suicide, murder and miscellaneous mayhem which are to bring panic to the *avant-garde* of Inish and expulsion to their innocent corrupters. "Sure we're often blue-mouldy for the want of a good bit of scandal," says Mrs. *Twohig* on their arrival, but three weeks of the higher drama leave the town wide open for the anti-septic sedative of a circus urgently summoned to restore order. Mr. T. ST. JOHN BARRY makes a good thing of an old ham actor, and the best of the others are Miss MINNIE MCKITTERICK's scatter-brained aunt and Mr. MICHAEL DUNNE's forthright hotel-keeper.

Such a plot presents chances which Mr. ROBINSON is not slow to take, and some of the scenes, particularly those in which the locals are the worse for Chekhov, are funny; but in the main the dialogue is patchy and the acting not up to the standard we have come to expect from Dublin. ERIC.



AWKWARDLY PLACED

Deborah Pomfret	MISS PATRICIA BURKE
Arthur Pomfret	MR. BASIL RADFORD
Melissa	MISS LALAGE LEWIS

with which real life unfolds a story is a good one, and Mr. WAYNE develops it wittily, Mr. RADFORD, who is in his best form of bonhomous incoherence, making a fine foil.

Miss CUMMINGS, who has the only opportunity the play provides of escaping from the fatuous into the realm of credible romance, seizes it warmly and makes out

Wimbledon Standard

THE public park in which I am playing tennis—a single—is a very large park. There is room for some hundreds of spectators around the court.

Nobody, however, is watching. Which is a pity, because I have just hit a back-hand which would not shame even a Wimbledon player. It is a hard shot. It passes over the net. It has top-spin. It is in the court. In a word, it is untakable.

My opponent is daunted. He had not known that I was a player of this calibre. Not, indeed, that I am.

And, at a distance, a young man is watching me, a soldier.

Good heavens, I have done it again!

Superb.

I have won the game.

And now the young soldier is moving towards me. A tennis enthusiast, no doubt, who knows a good player when he sees one.

He is behind me as I start to serve.

I like a gallery. It is therefore incumbent upon me to serve well.

I have.

I have hit the ball hard and in the right direction. It has passed over the net. It is in the right court. It is the serve of a professional.

And now I must turn to pick up another ball to serve again. I must be nonchalant

and must not give any appearance of pride as I turn my face towards my spectator.

But what is this? He is about to speak.

On what will he congratulate me? On my back-hand or my service? I shall be modest—but truthful. I shall admit that I am not a Wimbledon player. I shall explain I have not the time for it.

He opens his mouth.

"Gutter light?" he asks.

"MAN IN HASSOCK FIGHTS FASCISM IN S. AFRICA."—Heading in *Bombay paper*. Starts under a handicap, doesn't he?

The Method in Fiction

ANOTHER thing I have learned about writing is that it should always be done systematically to a rigid timetable. Years ago, before I had ever put pen to paper, I met a distinguished author and congratulated him upon his latest achievement. "Oh, that," he said, neighing nervously, "I just had to get that book out of my system. It more or less wrote itself." That little speech had a profound effect on me. You see, for a long time I had suspected that there were all kinds of novels lurking about in my system just waiting to be released. I used to feel them lying heavy on my stomach at night. Some nights they were almost unbearable, great hefty things running (I felt) to three or four closely-printed volumes. I used to lie awake wondering what they were about and whether they would need an index.

I gave them every chance to write themselves. Many are the hours I sat at my desk, just waiting. Sometimes I would write "The" or "A" to start them off, sometimes I would turn away my eyes in case they felt unhappy about people reading over their shoulders. But nothing made any difference. Try as I would, I couldn't shift those novels. They may have moved just a little, but only to embed themselves more firmly into the unconscious me. After a time I forgot all about them (that would be—let me see—when I got into the first eleven just before I met . . . h'm, now what was her name?) and they have never troubled me since.

I wrote my first novel to Arnold Bennett's prescription of a chapter a day. It was rejected at about the same rate. My second novel was written in daily instalments of one thousand words dead. Punctually at nine o'clock every morning I sat down at

my graph-paper and started upon the task of filling up my ten squares to a line. In twelve weeks I had an 80,000 words novel to my credit. It was as easy as that. But the publishers said that the joints were too obvious. You know how it is with a letter when your pen suddenly splutters and you write ". . . oh dear, I've run out of ink, and so I'll have to go on in pencil, sorry"; well, that's how it was with my book. My characters started well enough, but I couldn't sustain the colour of their hair, their height or nationality from one thousand words to the next. And of course this failing told against the novel.

My first published book, *Selections from Hodfellow*, was based on a thing called *Selections from Hardy*, a little book I picked up in Leeds of all places. I followed this with *The Best of Hodfellow*. The *Hodfellow Omnibus* and *The Pick of Hodfellow*, three books that were very economical to write. You see, there were many mornings when I knew as soon as I sat down that what I intended to write would not get into my anthologies. It would be crowded out by lack of space, perhaps, or wouldn't be quite up to the mark. So of course I didn't write it. I used to get in a lot of cricket during this period of my writing career.

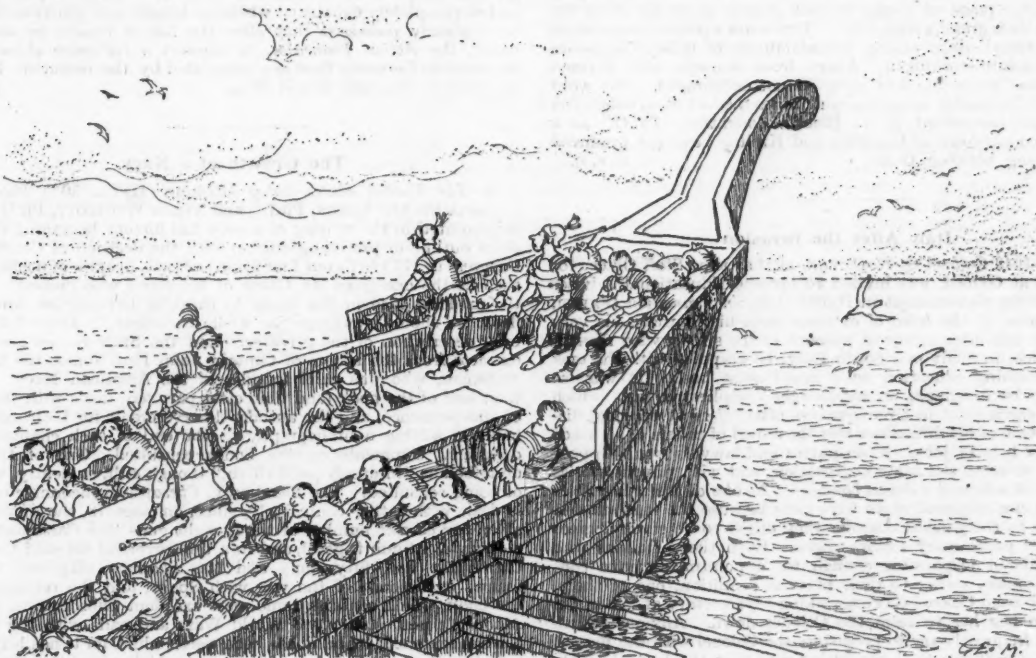
A chance remark overheard in a railway carriage towards the end of one glorious run-getting* summer completely altered my whole line of literary attack. Just outside Ealing a stoutish woman in a floral frock said to her companion, "Yes, our Mavis always has half a dozen novels on the go." Hearing that, I recalled how my old Uncle Wilfred used to sit by the fire of an evening with his lap full of library books. He would read for a time from one of them, turn down the corner of the page and attack another—and then another. He used to

say that it was a waste of a good book to read it through at one sitting, so he pecked at several in strict rotation. And from Uncle Wilfred my mind leaped to the many people who divide up their reading-matter geographically—the people who have a bathroom book, a bedside book, a book for the Underground and so on.

Then I got the idea. If the reader could have half a dozen novels on the go so could the writer. Next morning I rearranged my furniture and put six neat piles of foolscap on six different tables. Then I began to work at what my family now calls "fictional chairs." My itinerary is rather like that of a chess master playing six games concurrently. Two boards are devoted to crime detection and one each to the historical novel, the Western, the sociological romance and the love-story. I don't make much out of the historical stuff, but it earns its place in the team by throwing up so many passages of what might be called "fine writing" that transfers can easily be arranged. These help the other novels very considerably.

Young writers often ask me what is the best time of day to write. Well, there is no best time. You write when you just can't help writing, when the nature of your incoming mail or the presence of strange immovable men in bowler hats makes writing imperative. If you find that you tend to go to sleep in the mornings don't fight against it—take something to make sure of a really good rest. Then you'll be all the fitter for your nap in the afternoon. Remember that the human brain is never entirely inactive even when the body is asleep. Ideas, plots, rough sketches for new characters and all the other literary impedimenta you need are hatching out in your subconscious mind all the time you are asleep. Some day you're going to need all those impedimenta. Hod.

*Occasionally it was a run-getting summer.



"Extra bread ration? Nonsense! You're sedentary, aren't you?"

Our Booking Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

"Sudden Rains Never Last Long."

MORE men are still proverbially weather-wise than barometer-minded, though fifty years ago the little man and woman who came in and out of their house (on hidden cat-gut), according to whether it was to be wet or fine, were the infallible monitors of homely kitchens. Now the B.B.C. is devouring traditional lore apace, and barometers from Sheraton to seaweed. You can note the transition in *The Country Calendar* (SYLVAN PRESS, 8/6), in which three types of weather prophecy are superimposed like a palimpsest. *The Shepherd of Banbury's Rules*, which is the lowest and most delightful layer, was published in 1670, as the result of forty years' weather-watching, by John Claridge, shepherd. It was republished, with rather lofty comments, in 1790; and an 1827 edition of this republication is the one Professor G. H. T. KIMBLE, of McGill University, has reprinted with his own comments. His own comments, like those of the Georgian editor, are both confirmative and corrective; and are based on English weather, not American. Both commentaries are more elaborate—and sometimes less convincing—than the shepherd; and they haven't even found out for certain why thunder thunders! But Professor KIMBLE deserves everybody's gratitude for reviving the shepherd and collating him with modern research; and so does MARGARET WEBB for her expressive woodcuts.

H. F. E.

India: Inside, Outside

Among our recent anthologies of Service verse, *Poems from India* (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 8/6) is the one where meditation and environment seem to have added most to each other's stature. India is one up—so are the men; not because they understand each other—this is the book of "the landless soldier lost in war"—but because one civilization approaches another ceremoniously and with dignity. More than one poet stresses the grossness of the Hindu gods and the decorum of Indian women. One stresses the reversed status of their European opposite numbers. Paul Frederick Widdow, whose "Minutiae" are only just above the common high level, produces in "Manifesto of the Drowned Sailors" a poem which, for all its ingenuousness, is the most memorable in the volume. The editors, R. N. CURREY and R. V. GIBSON, ambiguously remark that "poets of to-day require poetry to do far more for them than their grandfathers did." (One notes a parallel impatience with traditional usage among manufacturers of milk-into-plastics and timber-into-stockings.) Apart from sonnets and rhymed couplets the "secondhand in form" is not encouraged. The word "Mandalay," casually occurring, underlines the fact that, unless you count Flight-Lieutenant E. L. Black's delightful "To O" as a song, the countrymen of Campion and Kipling have not produced a single song between them.

H. F. E.

Italy After the Invasion

In July 1943 Colonel G. R. GAYRE, at that time Staff Officer for Education at Oxford, was invited to become Educational Adviser to the Military Government in Italy. *Italy in Transition* (FABER, 12/6) contains, in the form of extracts from his journals, his very interesting, and often amusing, account of the six crowded months during which, in Sicily and South Italy, he grappled with the task of re-establishing education on a non-Fascist basis. It was, as may easily be imagined, an appallingly complicated task, which had to be carried out in circumstances often of great personal discomfort. One of his difficulties was the crowd of callers of all kinds in search of help or jobs. Even judges and lawyers would appear unshaved, so as to stimulate compassion, and with piteous stories of an invalid wife and a dozen *bambini*. At one of the universities Colonel GAYRE reopened there were riots because the students felt that owing to the general disorder they ought to be given degrees without the preliminary examinations. Even those Italians who were considered responsible enough for appointments gave considerable trouble, owing to their nervous condition, one of them, after a snub from Colonel GAYRE, waking his secretary at five in the morning to beg her to calm the Colonel down. Anxious callers would also frequently try to propitiate the Colonel with the Fascist salute. The author's final conclusion was that the best elements with which to rebuild the country were officials who had accepted Fascism without supporting it actively.

H. K.

Village Murmur

Goldsmith was, one supposes, the first—though he does not look like being the last—to introduce a fictitious Asiatic onlooker to comment on the eccentricities of the English. Mr. RALPH ARNOLD's Mr. Retting is at a disadvantage in this rôle; for he starts off on a serio-comic errand which has to be fulfilled by an unfortunately routine act of village tragedy. *Hands Across the Water* (CONSTABLE, 8/6) starts with the aplomb of a good short story. (All along one is conscious of a good short story technique diverted to a novel.) Mr. Retting, delegate of a Mongolian monarch, has been commissioned to comb England for the baby who is shortly to reincarnate his moribund sovereign. He starts at the Athenaeum Club—not, one hastens to add, with any immediate prospect of success, but in order to meet his appointed host, Colonel Pool. The search is conducted in the village of Farthingsole, whose local magnates, intelligentsia and aboriginals are all vivaciously depicted. But Mr. Retting, who started so bravely, fails to stay the course. The village takes the bit between its teeth. And when two couples depart from Farthingsole our Mongolian is, quite preposterously, the better half of one, while the other—a well-portrayed pair of enterprising English youngsters—makes a typical getaway to Eire.

H. F. E.

Modern France

Professor D. W. BROGAN is as vivid and brilliant on France as on the United States. In *French Personalities and Problems* (HAMISH HAMILTON, 10/6) he has selected from his contributions to English, French and American papers a number of articles which range from Dumas the elder and Bazaine to Charles Maurras and General de Gaulle. Writing from the political and social standpoint, he values Dumas chiefly as the embodiment of the sanguine, heroic strain in the French character, as a counteracting influence to "the admirable but depressing pictures of French life we get from the great masters." With Pétain and Laval in power, he suggests, it has been more salutary to remember Dumas than Balzac or Stendhal, Flaubert or Zola. The author's study of the Catholic Nationalist group is particularly interesting. Its leader, Charles Maurras, was profoundly repelled by the specifically Christian elements in Catholicism, but regarded Catholicism itself as the cement of Latin civilization, and France as the leader of the Latin countries. His hatreds, which included England, Germany, Protestantism, Liberalism, Dreyfus, and the Third Republic, were far more powerful and vocal than his loves. His increasingly narrow fanaticism alienated Maurice Barrès, of whom Professor BROGAN gives a sympathetic sketch, and after forty years of polemics he had so completely exhausted whatever human and generous feelings he originally possessed that after the fall of France he used his paper, the *Action Française*, to support a far more abject subservience to Germany than any advocated by the defeatists he had scourged in the first World War.

H. K.

The Growth of a Navy

In *The United States Navy* (ROBERT HALE, 30/-) Professors CARROLL STORRS ALDEN, Ph.D., and ALLAN WESTCOTT, Ph.D., have collaborated in the writing of a very full history beginning (after a short outline of preceding affairs) with the decision of Continental Congress in 1775 to fit out four armed vessels, in spite of declarations such as the one from Mr. Chase of Maryland who opined: "It is the maddest idea in the world to think of building an American fleet; we should mortgage the whole continent." There follows a brief description of the privateers and the State navies and some extracts from the letters of Captain John Paul Jones, the famous Scotman, who was chief founder of the American Navy. More than half of the book (and the better part too) deals with the War of Independence, and the authors deserve credit for their excellent habit of adding a bibliography at the end of each chapter, plus occasional comments on the books consulted. One of these is described as "intensely pro-British," though still, evidently, worthy of being consulted. The *Shannon v. Chesapeake* encounter of 1813 is dealt with rather confusingly, since, on page 78, the *Shannon* is given her correct number of thirty-eight guns (the *Chesapeake* was a thirty-eight-gun frigate), and in a table overleaf we read that the *Chesapeake* had fifty guns and the *Shannon* fifty-two. There follows an account of the war with Spain; and the remainder of the book, which contains some most excellent photographs, covers America's part in the two World Wars and ends with the rather curious sentence: "And it has been worth while, for it has helped to maintain the morale of our armed forces, and it has kept them human." Presumably the authors refer to sea rescues under danger, and not to the war itself. Their book is interesting throughout. B. E. B.



Food for Thought

THOUGHT has its limitations of course, but in general I am in favour of it. Or I was until yesterday, when a man stopped me in the street. His was a sad case of thought.

"What, sir," he asked, raising his cap and almost cringing, "is the difference between those two queues?"

He had a pallid, bulbous brow, well set off by a rather handsome purple neck-cloth. He wore white canvas shoes and a horse-tail moustache. I could see by his manner that it was a serious question, so I studied the two queues carefully.

"That's an amazing thing!" I exclaimed after a while.

It was extraordinary. Twenty-four women in each queue—neither of them moving. The tail of each was exactly the same distance from us. Both were at butcher's shops.

"A million to one chance!" I said genially, preparing to go. "Thank you for mentioning it. Very odd."

"Wait a minute, sir," he pleaded, laying a hand on my arm. "I want a pork chop."

"Indeed?"

"But which queue shall I go to?" he persisted.

"Either—surely it doesn't matter?"

"But which? I must have a reason." He did a little dance of impatience. "I'm a rational man, ain't I? I ask you, sir, am I a rational man?"

As a thinker, I began to see his point. I respected him for it. So many of us have become mere creatures of habit and impulse. I patted his shoulder kindly.

"You remind me of Buridan's ass," I smiled, ignoring his frown. "Buridan was a fourteenth-century philosopher. He quoted the case of an ass placed between two trusses of hay so exactly alike that it couldn't decide between them."

"What happened?" he asked suspiciously. "The poor beast died of starvation. You must not make the same mistake. Toss up for it."

"That's no good," he said gloomily. "Why should one queue be heads more than the other?"

"Then close your eyes and turn round three times," I snapped, losing patience.

"All right," he grumbled. "But it don't make sense."

He covered a surprising amount of ground in turning. His third spin crossed the path of a window-cleaner who was cycling slowly by with a ladder, and they did an extra spin together.

The cleaner was very nice about it, and we lifted the man with the purple neck-cloth and laid him gently at the end of one of the queues, which had now started to move. As I told the cleaner, there was no point in losing our place. We worked in turns; the cleaner wrung out one of his cloths and dabbed the unconscious man's face, while I dragged him carefully along the pavement as the queue moved up.

He soon came round, and by the time we reached the shop he was able to stand up without support. The damage was not serious, and now that the problem of choosing his queue was solved for him he became quite cheerful. He disappeared into the butcher's for his pork chop.

Still, I felt largely responsible for the accident, and decided to wait awhile and see him safely on his way home. When he reappeared I hurried to his side in alarm. He seemed quite broken up. His string bag was empty.

"What is it?" I cried. "Were they sold out?"

"No," he muttered thickly. "They had two left—two beauties, too."

"Then why on earth didn't you buy one?"

"They were exactly alike—like as two peas," he said, breaking down.

Ornaments

I SENT Mrs. Higgins a carved wooden elephant from Bombay and a brass cobra from Calcutta. In Trincomalee I could find only a tin cigarette-box, but in Colombo I found both an egret, made out of some kind of horn, and a superbly ugly copper pot. I knew she would proudly add all these to the already overloaded front sitting-room, and I wondered who was her lodger now. I hoped, with an unholy joy, that he felt the same way as I had done about the junk-shop atmosphere of that room, and I continued to buy. When we got ashore at Durban I sent her a model ox-cart on wheels; from Capetown I sent her two plates with views of Table Mountain. From Gib a repulsive Moroccan leather cushion . . .

I had taken Mrs. Higgins's front sitting-room in the spring of 1939. My previous landlady had nearly starved me: she used to pursue small economies like a hen hunting weevils. So, when I heard that Mrs. Higgins believed in good solid comfort, I counted myself lucky to become her lodger. And good solid comfort was certainly the keynote of her house: she was an excellent cook, served large helpings, kept the coal-scuttle filled, and never was stingy about electric-light bulbs.

But I suppose that too much comfort, like too much power, gradually corrupts a man. Give him the moon and he must have the stars as well. Now, if there is one thing a lodger must learn to do without, it is a soul that is sensitive about interior decoration. Every old lodger knows that, but I was young and foolish. Instead of counting my blessings, I began counting the ornaments. Even I was surprised to find that the room contained one hundred and thirty-six separate *objets d'art*, knick-knacks or what-have-yous on its horizontal surfaces, and eighty-nine pictures, prints, calendars, plates, mirrors and texts on its walls.

The mantelshelf was less overcrowded than any other surface, and its population was as follows: two chromium candlesticks, six large Etruscan vases, four small ditto, a china dog-cum-pin-cushion from Ramsgate, a solid glass ball for holding matches, which I particularly disliked, a photograph of Union Street, Aberdeen, in a tartan frame, a tin money-box in the shape of a frog, holding hair-pins, and a cuckoo-clock.

One evening I decided I could stand it no longer. I placed all the vases in a queue on the piano beside the door as a sign for their removal, and distributed all the other things about the room, leaving the mantelshelf quite bare. I stood back to admire the effect, left a box of my own matches there looking rather like a night-watchman's hut on a slum clearance site, and went out to post a letter and smoke a pipe.

When I returned the room was exactly as it had been before my ministrations, except that Mrs. Higgins was standing in the middle of it looking like a dive-bomber about to dive.

The less said about that scene the better. Mrs. Higgins delivered herself of what she had on her mind very clearly and slowly, like a District Commissioner reprimanding a rather backward native, and swept out. The cuckoo-clock then said "cuckoo" even more loudly than usual, the vases seemed to swell with righteousness to even more horrid shapes, and Uncle Ebenezer, hanging between two views of Loch Lomond above the bell handle, seemed to sneer at me and say very pointedly, "Just you dare to lay a hand on me, young man . . ."

As far as Mrs. Higgins was concerned the subject was closed, and

she brought me an extra good supper that night, as if to emphasize that by-gones might be by-gones.

I was baffled. But I felt sure that the heroes of fiction, such as Richmal Crompton's William and Saki's Clovis, would have found a way of pruning the superfluous pottery; so I racked my brains. Nothing brilliant occurred to me, and I was just screwing up my courage to begin having a series of dreadful accidents with those vases when History intervened: Hitler invaded Poland and war was declared. I very soon found myself in the Navy. Needless to say, I discovered that the interior decoration of a destroyer erred on the side of over-simplicity, even of actual austerity, and the solid comforts of Mrs. Higgins faded into a rosy dream.

It became a sort of relaxation to me, during the long and weary hours we spent on the ocean, to go round that sitting-room in memory and recall exactly every object in it. The area on both sides of the fireplace was easy, and I rarely made a mistake, although for a long time I forgot the second set of fire-irons. But it took me the whole of two Atlantic convoys to remember the precise number of occasional tables between the piano and the aspidistra in the bow window and what they carried, for I had usually had my back to that part of the room.

What a document of social history that room was, if one could only read it correctly! The wide wooden frame of the mirror over the mantelshelf, about the size and shape of a lavatory seat, was carved with the lotus pattern and belonged to the Art Nouveau period. I suppose that was the commonest kind of mirror in the shops if one was furnishing around 1910. Then there were one or two reproductions of war artists' highly imaginative renderings of events in France during the first World War; and the impact of the Wembley Exhibition on interior decoration was exemplified by a souvenir ash-tray and a cushion bearing the representation of a Red Indian's head. The chromium candlesticks were much later—early 1930's, I should think: possibly a silver wedding present? But quite a few objects were of Eastern inspiration, *e.g.*, the bamboo table carrying the aspidistra, the four Benares brass plates or trays, much odd china, and a moth-eaten silk fan with a dragon worked on it. Had Mr. Higgins (deceased) served as a Tommy in China during the Boxer Rising? Or did they merely date back to one of the much earlier nineteenth-century enthusiasms for the Romance of the East?

Anyway, I was determined to make my own contributions to that room, and our cruise to Australia resulted in some fine purchases. How I laughed to imagine the face of the poor lodger when Mrs. Higgins brought in the boomerang paper-knife (whose handle was a kookaburra) which I sent from Fremantle, or the photogravure print in three colours (slightly out of register) of Sydney Harbour Bridge!

The laugh has since frozen on my lips. I suppose I should have foreseen that I *might* come out of the war alive, and return to my old job, and find that Mrs. Higgins could take me back as a lodger. But I could hardly have foreseen that the room would be turned into a bed-sitter, and that I should have to suffer it all by night as well as by day . . .

If Uncle Ebenezer doesn't take that grin off his face I shall be compelled to hit him with the fly-whisk I sent back from Algiers.



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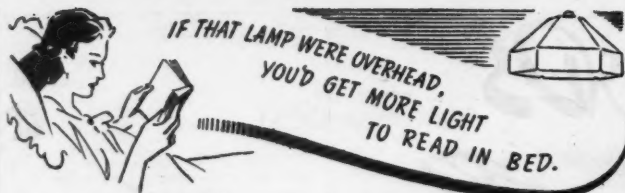
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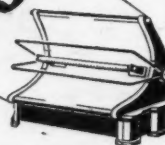
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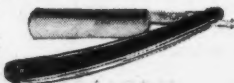
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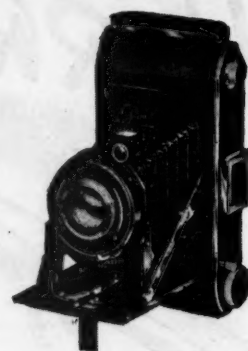
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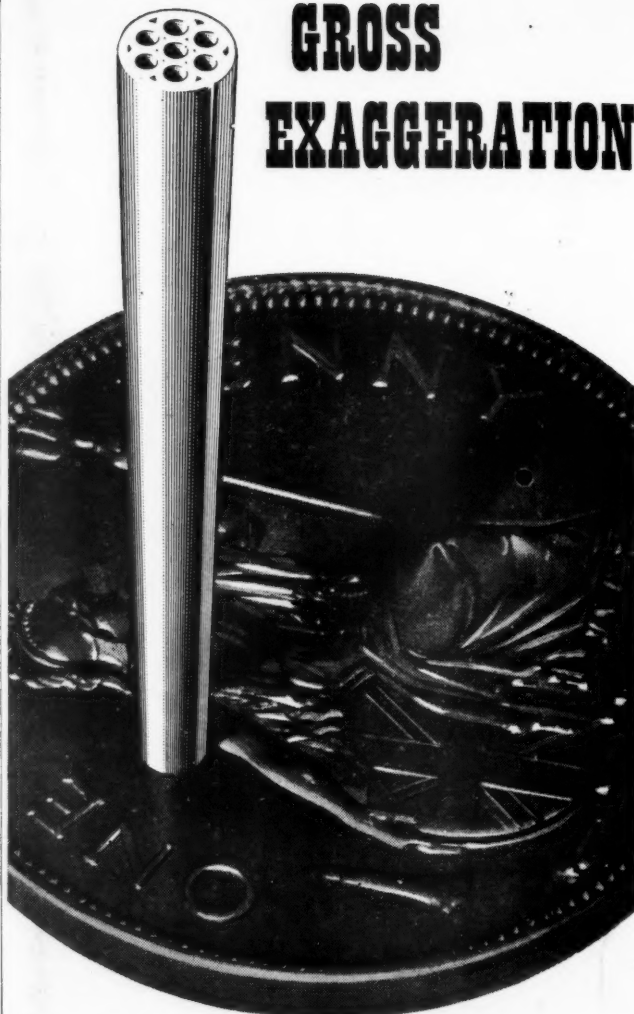
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